

NOTES ON THE MOLLUSCA FROM A RAINWASH AT DARENTH,
KENT.

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DURING the winter of 1894-5 extensive excavations were carried on in the parish of Darent, resulting in the exposure of the remains of a large Roman building, which had been covered since its desertion by a rainwash varying in thickness from two to six feet. Out of this rainwash I have obtained fifteen species of Mollusca, viz.—

- Amalia Sowerbyi*, Fér.
Vitrea cellaria, Müll.
 „ *nitidula*, Drap.
Pyramidula rotundata, Müll.
Helicella cricetorum, Müll.
 „ *caperata*, Mont.
Hygromia hispida, Linn.
Vallonia pulchella, Müll.
Helicigona arbustorum, Linn.
Helix aspersa, Müll.
 „ *nemoralis*, Linn.
Clausilia bidentata, Ström.
Cochlicopa lubrica, Müll.
Cæcilianella acicula, Müll.
Cyclostoma elegans, Müll.

With the exception of *Helix aspersa* and *H. nemoralis*, all the examples were obtained from one spot at the base of the deposit, and were mixed with fragments of bone and Roman pottery. *Helix aspersa* and *H. nemoralis*, however, were much more abundant, and always occurred at the very base; the upper portion of the rainwash contained no shells. There can be no doubt that the above list represents the molluscan fauna of the immediate neighbourhood at the period immediately subsequent to the Roman occupation, and on comparing it with the existing species a difference is at once seen. All the species enumerated are now living in the vicinity; but, on the other hand, there are four species which, though extremely abundant at the present time, are entirely absent in the deposit, viz., *Hygromia rufescens*, *Helix hortensis*, *Helicella cantiana*, and *H. virgata*. The absence of the first-named is due, probably, to local causes, since it occurs at Copford, Crossness, and elsewhere. *Helix hortensis* is not known to occur in any deposit, though often erroneously recorded, and in this case there is no possibility of confounding it with *Helix nemoralis*, because all the examples retain their coloration. The past distribution of *Helicella virgata* is rather puzzling. It is entirely absent from

all beds of the London district,¹ but occurs in the Pleistocene gravels of Barrington, Cambridge; and I have lately had examples sent me from a Neolithic rainwash at St. Catherine's Down, Isle of Wight. In all probability it is a very recent introduction into the Home Counties. The non-occurrence of *Helicella cantiana* fully bears out Mr. B. B. Woodward's view that this species is of post-Roman introduction into this country. *Helix aspersa* has been recorded from several Roman deposits, and has been considered to have been introduced at that time, but Mr. J. W. Flower notes² that it is constantly found in British barrows in Wiltshire, and it occurs in the St. Catherine's Down deposit. Mr. B. B. Woodward has also called my attention to the fact that it is recorded from deposits resembling "kitchen middens" on the shores of the Mersey, one mile from the present sea-shore,³ so that its pre-Roman existence in this country must be admitted.

¹ Since this was written, a specimen has been obtained by Dr. Corner from the Pleistocene deposit at Ilford.

² J. W. Flower, F.G.S., "The Prehistoric Sepulchres of Algeria": Transactions of International Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology, 1868, p. 209.

³ C. Collingwood, Proc. Lit. and Phil. Soc. Liverpool, 1863, pp. 113-4.